

Characteristics of the Agrarian structure of India

- The main characteristics of the agrarian structure which independent India inherited were:
 - a) absentee land ownership;
 - b) exploitation of tenants through high rents and insecurity of tenure;
 - c) unequal distribution of land;
 - d) tiny and fragmented holdings; and
 - e) lack of adequate institutional finance to agriculture.

Why Land Reform Needed

- The ownership and control over land was highly concentrated in the hands of few land lords and a few intermediaries.
- Size and distribution of land holding-
- **Ownership holding** is defined as the area of land which a person or a family owns. The problem was of subdivision and fragmentation.
- When a holding is held in several scattered plots, it is called a 'fragmented holding' and the process creating such holdings is termed 'fragmentation'.
- **Operational Holding** = Ownership Holding — Land Leased out + Land Leased in)

Objectives of Agrarian Reforms

- i) To change the unequal and unproductive agrarian structure;
- ii) To remove exploitative agrarian relations, often known as patron-client relationship in agriculture,
- iii) To promote agriculture growth with social justice

After Independence, the Indian National Congress appointed the **Agrarian Reforms Committee under the Chairmanship of J.C. Kumarappa**, for making an in-depth study of the agrarian relations prevailing in the country. The committee submitted its report in 1949 which has considerable impact on Agrarian Reforms Policy.

The five components of land reform are as follows:

- 1) Abolition of the Intermediaries,
- 2) Tenancy Reforms-
 - i) Regulation of Rent
 - ii) Security of Tenure
 - iii) Ownership Rights for tenants
- 3) Reorganisation of land-
 - i) Redistribution of Land
 - ii) Consolidation of holdings, and
 - iii) cooperative farming.
- 4) Compilation and updating of land records.
- 5) Ceiling on Land

1. Abolition of the Intermediaries

- States enacted acts in 1950 for Abolition of the Intermediaries, although the nature and effects of such legislation varied from state to state. In some states such as West Bengal and J&K imposed ceiling others states allowed intermediaries to keep land for personal cultivation without limit being set. Ceiling laws were passed in 1960 by this time many land owners transferred land in legal or illegal manner. Therefore, many large intermediaries continued to exist even after formal abolition of zamindari. After abolition of intermediaries nearly 20 million cultivators in the country were brought into direct contact with the Government.

Advantages of Abolition of the Intermediaries:

- 20 Million farmers / tenants were estimated to have come into direct contact with the State making them owners of land.
- The abolition of intermediaries has led to the end of a parasite class.
- More land for distribution to landless farmers was available.
- Tenants took interest in the development of land

Disadvantages of Abolition of the Intermediaries:

1. Abolition of intermediaries has resulted in a heavy burden on the state exchequer . The ex-intermediaries have been given a compensation amounting to Rs. 670 crores in cash and in bonds.
2. It has led to large-scale eviction. Large-scale eviction, in turn, has given rise to several problems – social, economic, administrative and legal.
3. Absentee land-lords as a class emerged and garbed the land.

2. Tenancy Reforms

1. **Regulation of Rent:** The Agrarian Reforms Committee recommended that rent must be regulated. Some states banned tenancy whereas some banned leasing.
2. **Security of Tenure:** Security was provided to tenants but in absence of proper land records tenants were evicted.
3. **Ownership Rights to Tenants:** Legislations were passed to confer ownership rights on tenant cultivator. In some states tenants were made the owner and asked to pay compensation to the previous owner.

3. Reorganisation of Land- i) Redistribution of land

1. Vinoba Bhave launched these movements in Telengana The objective was to persuade landowners in each concerned villlage to renounce their land rights, after which all the lands would become the property of a village association for the egalitarian redistribution and for purpose of joint cultivation.
2. Vinoba Bhave hoped to eliminate private ownership of land through Bhoodan and Gramdan and maintained that the movement would go a long way to ensure the just redistribution of land, the consolidation of holding and their joint cultivation
3. The movement failed to achieve its objectives. Land donated was unfit for cultivation. www.ghadoliyaseconomics-mahendra.blogspot.in

ii) Consolidation of Holdings:

1. The term 'Consolidation of holdings' refers to amalgamation and redistribution of the fragmented land with a view to bringing together all plots of land of a cultivator in one compact block.
2. After independence almost all States passed law for the consolidation of holdings. It was made compulsory in Punjab and Haryana.
3. Consolidation provided for Prohibition of fragmentation below standard area, fixation of minimum standard area for regulating transfers, schemes of Consolidation by exchange of holdings, reservation of land for common areas and procedure for its implementation.

iii) Cooperative Farming

- Cooperative farming refers to an organisation in which:
- each member-farmer remains the **owner** of his land **individually**. But farming is done **jointly**.
- **Profit** is distributed among the member-farmers **in the ratio of land owned** by them.
- **Wages** distributed among the member-farmers according to **number of days** they worked.
- In other words, Cooperative farming= pooling of land and practicing joint agriculture. Cooperative farming is not a new concept in India. Since ancient times, Indian farmers have been giving mutual aid to each other in weeding, harvesting etc.

4. Compilation and updating of land records.

- In the Sixth five year Plan it was said that compilation and updating of land records would be completed in a phased manner by 1985.
- Regular periodical updating of land record-
- Compilation and updating of the land records are an essential condition for the effective implementation of land reforms programme. In recent years the states have been urged to take all measures for updating land records with the utmost urgency by adopting a time-bound programme. Efforts are also being made to maintain the land records through computerization.

5. Ceilings on Land Holding:

1. The term 'ceiling on land holdings' refers to the legally stipulated maximum size beyond which no individual farmer or farm household can hold any land.
2. Several states passed different legislations and gave many relaxations. As a result the surplus land available for redistribution was negligible.
3. Efforts should be made to redistribute ceiling surplus land and to enforce ceiling laws effectively.

Aim of land ceilings :

- According to the Report of the Panel on Land Reforms, the aim of land ceilings was to:
 - (i) meet widespread desire to possess land;
 - (ii) reduce glaring inequalities in ownership and use of land;
 - (iii) reduce inequalities in agricultural income and enlarge the sphere of self employment; and
 - (iv) give a new status to the land-less.

Causes of slow progress of land reforms:

1. Lack of political will
2. Flaws in legislation- definition of personal cultivation
3. No limit for personal cultivation
4. Malafide transfers of land
5. Inadequate proofs of tenants4problem of voluntary surrender
6. Inadequate ceiling laws
7. Legal hurdles
8. Absence of proper land records.

www.ghadoliyaseconomics-mahendra.blogspot.in